

# GROWING ORGANIC WITH EQIP

## EQIP ASSISTANCE FOR ORGANIC PRODUCERS

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (2008 Farm Bill) highlights the availability of financial and technical assistance to help producers of all commodities meet their conservation goals. It specifically includes help to organic producers through the 2010 Organic Initiative.

Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), this nationwide special initiative provides financial assistance to National Organic Program (NOP) certified producers as well as producers in the process of transitioning to organic production. All organic certified applicants must have an organic system plan that meets NOP guidelines. (More information on those guidelines can be found at [www.ams.usda.gov/nop/](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/))

Signup for EQIP is continuous. Organic producers applying through this initiative can receive up to \$20,000/year or \$80,000 over six years. USDA is offering more than \$1.4 million to Iowa organic producers through the Initiative. Farmers may also compete for the larger pool of EQIP funds that allow for up to \$300,000 over six years.

## ORGANIC INITIATIVE REQUIREMENTS

- Financial assistance is provided for only those practices which will assist growers to meet provisions of an Organic System Plan (OSP) as administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).
- Payments are not authorized for activities or practices which are solely production related and are not linked to an identified resource concern.
- Participants who are already certified organic must implement EQIP practices according to an approved OSP and submit a copy of their current OSP.
- Participants who are transitioning to organic production must submit a self-certification letter stating they agree to develop and implement conservation practices for certified organic production that are consistent with an organic system plan, and the name and contact information of the USDA-accredited certifying agent who will be used for the organic certification process.

## Iowa Organic Initiative Conservation Practices

- Animal Mortality Facility
- Composting Facility
- Conservation Crop Rotation (limited basis)
- Conservation Plan Supporting Organic Transition - Written
- Contour Buffer Strips
- Contour Farming
- Cover Crop
- Critical Area Planting
- Fence
- Field Border
- Forage Harvest Management
- Heavy Use Protection Area
- Nutrient Management
- Pasture and Hay Planting
- Pest Management
- Pipeline
- Prescribed Grazing
- Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till/ Direct Seed
- Residue and Tillage Management, Ridge-Till
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
- Seasonal High Tunnel System for Crops
- Stripcropping
- Watering Facility
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Renovation



## CONSERVATION PLANNING

For more than 70 years, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has placed a high priority on helping agricultural producers with conservation plans to meet their environmental and economic goals, while concurrently planning for the protection of the soil, water, air and wildlife resources. Conservation goals are highly individual and may certainly include transitioning to organic agriculture (or boosting pollinator populations, increasing biodiversity including soil-borne organisms, enhancing water quality, controlling invasive species or dozens of other resource-enhancing possibilities).

NRCS conservationists work with farmers to come up with scientifically-sound alternatives for accomplishing their goals and working out a timeline to implement the conservation practices in the plan.

All information provided to NRCS for conservation planning purposes is confidential. Implementation may be partially funded through Farm Bill programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

## WHAT IS AN OSP?

An OSP is a management plan for organic production or for an organic handling operation that has been agreed to by the producer/handler and the certifying agent. It includes all written plans that govern all aspects of ag production or handling. An OSP must be developed annually and include:

1. Practices and procedures to be performed and maintained;
2. A list of each substance to be used in production or handling;
3. Monitoring practices and procedures to be performed and maintained;
4. A description of the record keeping system;
5. Practices and physical barriers established to prevent co-mingling with conventional food and contact with prohibited substances, and;
6. Additional information deemed necessary by the certifying agent (CA) to document NOP compliance.

## MORE INFORMATION

For more information about 2008 Farm Bill activities, visit the national NRCS Web site:

**[www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2008](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2008)**

For detailed Iowa conservation practice information, call Iowa NRCS at (515) 284-6655, or go online:

**[www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ia\\_standards.html](http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/ia_standards.html)**



**United States Department of Agriculture**  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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